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Motorcycle Safety Tips

Curse the Darkness, or Light a Candle?

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FACT: Car drivers often do not see us in traffic.

FACT: Many crashes involve a car driver violating a motorcyclist's right of way (turning left in front of us, for example).

FACT: When there is a crash, we are much more likely to get hurt.

These are the facts. The *STAR* program is developing a motorist awareness campaign for 2007 to help with this, but as individual riders in traffic, there is little we can do to change these facts. The question to ask ourselves is "What can we do – given these facts?"

Many riders say "Drivers **SHOULD** see us!" And I have to agree. However, there are a lot of things that **SHOULD** be:

- I **SHOULD** be 25 pounds lighter than I am
- The Seahawks really **SHOULD** have won the Superbowl last year
- My dog **SHOULD** pee outside, and not on the carpet

Wishing it were different doesn't change anything. So, what can we do?

#1. Expect them NOT to see you. This means being prepared for the oncoming car to turn in front of you. This means being prepared for the car to change lanes into your space. This means taking action by adjusting your speed, adjusting your position, and communicating with traffic as needed to make yourself less vulnerable and give you more time to react.

#2. Take steps to be more visible. Now you might think, "Why should I have to do that – they are the ones that should see me!" True enough. But who suffers if they don't see you? Take a look at your riding gear and your bike – how visible are you? If you are all in dark colors, you can be difficult to see. Light colors, extra lights, and retro-reflective material on your jacket, helmet, and/or bike can really help you stand out.

#3. Try not to get emotionally involved. If someone cuts you off, turns in front of you, or tries to change lanes into you – give them the benefit of the doubt that they didn't do it on purpose. The main reason for this is that when we get mad, we make bad decisions. Let's face it – racing up beside them and flipping them off really doesn't accomplish anything except maybe make **THEM** mad, too.

Ride smart, be safe, and Happy Holidays!

Idaho *STAR* Motorcycle Safety Program

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